

Chapter 11

Incident Management

The FWS Fire Management Handbook incorporates, by reference, all guidance in the [Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations Handbook](#) (Redbook, NFES #2724) Chapter 11 in addition to the following FWS specific clarifications:

Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS)

The Wildfire decision Support System will be used to document decisions on extended attack wildfires, multiple objective wildfires and escaped prescribed fires.

Wildland Fire Management Standards

Every wildland fire on or threatening our lands requires an initial action by using an appropriate management response.

Wilderness Wildland Fires - Wildland fires in wilderness or other specially reserved areas will be managed as identified in the approved Fire Management Plan. Line officers may authorize the use of all suppression methods, tools, and equipment, including motorized equipment, in wilderness areas or proposed wilderness areas. A minimum tool analysis will be used to determine wilderness values and objectives.

Contracts and Cooperative Agreements - Develop contracts and cooperative agreements to provide the primary backup suppression capability on our lands whenever possible. Exercise care to assure that such agreements and contracts are cost effective and provide adequate protection to our resources. The Division of Contracting and General Services and/or the Solicitor's Office will review them for legal sufficiency. An explanation of contracts and other types of agreements is in the Fire Management Handbook.

Force Account Suppression- We expect each field office with wildland fire occurrence that poses a threat of resource loss or has a prescribed fire program to maintain a minimal initial attack capability using field office staff meeting training and physical fitness requirements for suppression. It does not include field offices in the following categories:

- Field offices that have infrequent fires posing no threat of resource loss;
- Field offices that have binding contracts or agreements for fire suppression;
- Alaska refuges, since the Alaska Fire Service and its cooperator, the State of Alaska, provide emergency wildland fire suppression services.

How does the Service evaluate wildland fire - Evaluations of major wildland fire operations yield information important to improving future planning. Evaluations take several forms:

Debriefing- The project leader will conduct a meeting of selected individuals as soon as possible after releasing personnel from the fire. Attendees should include all key refuge staff, overhead, the incident management team, and affected cooperators. We require a written narrative of the fire activities by the incident commander to the project leader as part of the debriefing.

Field Office Review

- The project leader will conduct an oral fire review following each of our wildland fires in order to ensure that we conduct suppression operations in a safe manner and within policy and guidelines. This review may be formal or informal and be as in depth as the incident requires. The project leader may request assistance from the Regional Office in making this review.
- We intend to determine if response to the incident conformed to incident planning and met the intent of refuge planning documents. The project leader will take necessary corrective actions within their authority. The Regional Office will take actions requiring higher level decisions.
- The project leader will prepare a record of the review. The record will contain any findings and corrective actions taken. The project leader will keep the record on file and submit a copy of the record to the RFMC through appropriate channels.

Incident Management Team Assessment - When we use an Incident Management Team on our fire, the project leader, in conjunction with the Regional Fire Management Coordinator, will assess the team's performance. Submit the assessment through channels to our Service Fire Management Coordinator. A sample close-out review is in our Fire Management Handbook.

Informal Review - Conduct a review, but not necessarily a formal Board of Review, in the event of a 'near miss' or similar occurrence which appears to have procedural or policy implications.

Board of Review - The Regional Director or Assistant Director, Refuges and Wildlife, calls a Board of Review to identify specific problems that involve procedural or policy matters pertaining to suppression actions.

- Regional Fire Management Coordinator;
- Refuge Fire Management Officer;
- Regional Safety Manager;
- Service Fire Management Coordinator;
- Other agency representatives as appropriate;
- Experts in specifically needed fields.

Air Quality and Smoke Management

Clean air is a primary natural resource value in all Fish and Wildlife Service units. Fire management activities which result in the discharge of air pollutants (e.g., particulates, carbon monoxide, and other pollutants from fires) are subject to, and must comply with, all applicable Federal, state, interstate, and local air pollution control requirements, as specified by Section 118 of the Clean Air Act, as amended (42 USC 7418). These requirements are the same substantive, procedural, and administrative requirements (See [561 FW 2](#)) that apply to a private person or other non-governmental entity. The protection of these resources must be given full consideration in fire management planning and operations.

Coordination with a state or states air regulatory office is required during the development of resource and fire management plans in order to determine procedures for compliance with state air quality regulations. The FWS Air Quality Branch (aqb) should be contacted on the proper procedures for obtaining coordination with the state or states in which the refuge is located, or when notified by the state that an air pollution violation has occurred.

At the time the draft Fire Management Plan is sent to the regional office for review, the regional office will determine if the smoke management portions of the plan will be sent to the aqb for review and comment. A copy of the comments from the aqb will be returned to the region and will be forwarded to the refuge with the regional comments. When the draft Fire Management Plan is in the region for review, the Regional Fire Management Coordinator will ensure that the air quality coordinator reviews the smoke management portion of the plan and the comments from aqb before they are returned to the refuge. A copy of the air quality section(s) of the approved Fire Management Plan will be sent to the aqb.

The [Smoke Management Guide for Prescribed and Wildland Fire 2001 Edition](#) (NFES 1279, www.nwcg.gov/pms/pubs/SMG/SMG-72.pdf) is the FWS primary technical reference and should be referenced when developing and implementing wildland fire management plans. Other useful geographical and activity specific publications are:

- [Southern Forestry Smoke Management Guidebook](#). Mobley et.al., USDA Forest Service GTR SE-10, December, 1976. A very detailed and comprehensive book but written specifically for the Southern States. It is an excellent reference for principles of smoke management. The abbreviated principles listed below are from this publication.
- [Principles of Smoke Dispersion from Prescribed Fires in Northern Rocky Mountain Forests](#). W.R. Beaufait and O.P. Cramer, USDA Forest Service, Division of Fire Control, Northern Region, Missoula, Montana, August 5, 1969 (revised January 15, 1972). This publication covers the subject well but is confined to the Northern Rocky Mountains.
- [Slash Smoke Management Guidelines](#). Office of the State Forester, Salem, Oregon, September 11, 1969. An excellent publication, though limited to slash burning and to the State of Oregon.
- Other useful publications can be found at the NIFC Smoke management website: <http://www.nifc.gov/smoke/publications.htm>

Post Wildfire Activities

Service policy augments Department of the Interior emergency stabilization and burned area rehabilitation policy and program guidance found in [Departmental Manual 620 DM 3](#) and the [Interagency Burned Area Response](#) and [Burned Area Rehabilitation](#) Guidebooks.

Roles, Responsibilities and Accountability - Plan preparation, review, approval, and implementation require immediate action and span multiple program responsibilities and disciplines as summarized below:

- Plan preparation - Refuge Manager
- Plan review
 - Compatibility and compliance review - Refuge Manager
 - Fiscal and policy review – Regional Fire Management Coordinator / National Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation Coordinator
- Plan approval
 - < \$500,000 - Regional Director
 - \$500,000 - Chief, Branch of Fire Management
- Plan implementation - Refuge Manager
 - Plan implementation oversight - Refuge Supervisor
- Program budget tracking and accountability - Chief, Branch of Fire Management
 - National Fire Plan Operations and Reporting System (NFPORS) planning and initial project entry – National Burned Area Emergency Response Coordinator

Planning - Emergency stabilization and rehabilitation treatments will be described in separate plans. The Burned Area Emergency Response (emergency stabilization) Plan will specify only emergency activities and treatments carried out within one year of wildfire containment. Plans must be completed within 7 calendar days after total wildfire containment and approved within 6 business days of receipt by the approving office (extensions can be granted by the approving office). The Burned Area Rehabilitation Plan will specify non-emergency activities and treatments which are compatible with approved unit management plans and can be accomplished within 3 years of wildfire containment. A plan amendment, approved by the original plan approval authority unless the total cost of the plan exceeds that authority, is required to document and support any additional funding requests and can be made at any time. Burned Area Emergency Response (emergency stabilization) and Burned Area Rehabilitation Plan templates are provided.

- [Burned Area Emergency Response \(emergency stabilization\) Plan template and examples](#)
- [Burned Area Rehabilitation Plan template and examples](#)

Plan Review and Approval - Project leaders submit electronic copies of completed plans to the Regional Fire Management Coordinator (RFMC) and National Burned Area Emergency Response Coordinator (NBAERC) for concurrent and coordinated technical, fiscal and policy review. The RFMC presents the plan and RFMC/NBAERC approval recommendations to the Regional Director for approval. Following Regional Director approval, the NBAERC presents plans with estimated costs > \$500,000 to the Chief, Fire Management Branch for final approval.

Funding - Emergency Stabilization (subactivity 9142) and Burned Area Rehabilitation (subactivity 9262) funding guidance should be referenced when developing and implementing a Burned Area Emergency Response (emergency stabilization) and/or Burned Area Rehabilitation Plan. The FireCode fire number will be used to establish the cost structure for all 9142 and 9262 projects. The appropriate cost structure will be activated only after plan and funding approval. Consideration of additional Emergency Stabilization or Burned Area Rehabilitation funding beyond the first year requires monitoring results documented in the Annual Accomplishment Report (see Reporting Requirements below).

- **Subactivity 9142** - Emergency Stabilization funding is provided for no more than one year following containment of the wildfire. However, emergency stabilization funding can be used for up to three years following total containment of the wildfire for treatment effectiveness monitoring and to repair or replace emergency stabilization structures or treatments where failure to do so would imperil watershed functionality or result in serious loss of downstream values. Emergency stabilization funding cannot be used to continue seeding, plantings, and invasive plant treatments beyond one year. Continued treatment funding beyond the first year requires an approved plan amendment including monitoring documentation justifying the additional funding request and data entry into the NFPORS Restoration and Rehabilitation module. Emergency stabilization plans and expenditures will conform to standards in the [Interagency Burned Area Emergency Response Guidebook](#).
- **Subactivity 9262** – Funding for burned area rehabilitation treatments is provided in one-year increments for no more than three years following containment of a wildland fire. Obligating funds in one fiscal year for use in another should only be done when there is not sufficient time to initiate and complete the contracting necessary to begin treatment work identified in an approved plan. All burned area rehabilitation projects or treatments are funded on a priority basis as established by the NBAER Coordinators in consultation with the Office of Wildland Fire Coordination. If necessary, the priority selection for treatments on prior-year fires will occur shortly after the start of each fiscal year. Funding will be distributed upon passage of the Interior Appropriation bill or other appropriate budget legislation. Burned area rehabilitation plans will conform to standards in the [Interagency Burned Area Emergency Response Guidebook](#).

Budget Allocation - The Branch of Fire Management will budget and allocate available Emergency Stabilization (subactivity 9142) or Burned Area Rehabilitation (subactivity 9262) funds based on information in the approved plan by:

- The original FireCode assigned during suppression efforts will be utilized within the cost structure for the approved plan (either 9142 or 9262)
- Establishing a FireCode compatible cost structure for the approved plan (either 9142 or 9262).
- Initiating the budget allocation process based on fiscal year funding needs identified in the approved plan.
- Notifying (via e-mail) the regional fire management and budget offices of the funding allocated.
- The region or host unit will establish the appropriate cost structure using the host unit organization code.

Reporting Requirements - A Burned Area Emergency Response (emergency stabilization) and/or Burned Area Rehabilitation Plan Annual Accomplishment Report is required to receive continued funding in years two and three. The reports are archived in the field unit's project files and electronic copies are sent to the RFMC and the Branch of Fire Management in Boise, Idaho, no later than September 15th each fiscal year. The Annual Accomplishment Report is in two parts. A written narrative will contain a project summary and document the actual initiation and completion date, actual accomplishments, implementation actions and costs, and treatment effectiveness monitoring results for each approved treatment and activity identified in the Burned Area Emergency Response (emergency stabilization) and/or Burned Area Rehabilitation Plan. The second part of the report will be entering treatment and activity completion information into the National Fire Operations and Reporting System (NFPORS).

The Burned Area Emergency Response (emergency stabilization) and/or Rehabilitation Plan Final Accomplishment Report will report overall actions taken in sufficient detail to document all accomplishments, implementation costs and monitoring results. The reports are archived in the field unit's project files and electronic copies are sent to the RFMC and the Branch of Fire Management in Boise, Idaho, no later than 3 years and 60 days following wildfire containment. The Service's [Emergency Stabilization and Burned Area Rehabilitation web site](#) contains procedures for accomplishment reporting and posting of Final Accomplishment reports.